GATES OF GLORY

By
T. B. Windross

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Gates of Glory

And

Other Poems

T. B. Windross

By

T. B. Windross

1949

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By

T. B. Windross

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Dedicated

to

the Memory of My Father,

Thomas Cook Windross,

Whose Love and Noble Example Have Inspired

the Best in Me, and Rebuked the Worst in Me,

Ever Since My Earliest Boyhood, and Whose

Favorite Quotation Was: "A Good Name

Is Rather to Be Chosen Than Great Riches."

And

to My Mother

Who Told Me My Father's Last Thoughts

Were of Me, and the Last Words

on His Lips My Childhood Name.

— T. B. W.

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INTRODUCTION

THOMAS Carlyle once said that "a vein of poetry exists in the hearts of all men." I believe that to be so. But, alas, not all of us can tap that vein and bring forth the treasures. We bore and dig to no avail. Nevertheless, all of us can, if we will, appreciate the products of more adept minds. No man need be so spiritually bereft that he cannot find pleasure in poetry, joy in hearing the most beautiful words in their most beautiful form.

I have found it a pleasant experience reading the poems by my friend T. B. Windross. It is plain that much living and deep thought on great themes have gone into these lines of his. He has the poetic instinct and skill, and I am sure his poems will be welcomed by a large public. Mr. Windross is a new voice raised in our great Canada to give expression to the soul of this young nation, and to add to our increasing contribution to human culture. I count it an honour to be privileged to wish this little volume a bon voyage.

(Rev.) ANGUS JAMES MACQUEEN

Robertson United Church,
Edmonton, Alberta.

FOREWORD

THE story of the discovery of Churchill Harbor by the Danish navigator, Munck, is one of the neglected episodes in the history of the search for the Northwest Passage. Few Canadian writers have done more than mention it, and no writer of romances has yet, so far as the author knows, used it as a background for a thrilling tale. The only permanent memorial of Munck in Canada is the name "Munck's Cove," given to a small inlet in Churchill Harbor.

Munck was a man of unflinching devotion to duty and of indomitable courage. He began going to sea at the age of twelve and at nineteen he was captain of a vessel in his own right. His adventures in the Caribbean afford thrilling reading. In a convoy in which he sailed from Brazil he suffered shipwreck following a battle with pirates led by the French freebooter, Ribald.

The fullest account of his discovery of Churchill, which he named "Munck's Winter Haven," and the detailed record of the sufferings of his expedition, are to be found in the Hakluyt Society's record, *The Expedition of Captain Jens Munck* (London, 1897). Hakluyt also gives the only authentic copy of Munck's diary.

The poems in this collection are not offered to the reader as perfect in either form or thought. They have been read and approved by friends, but the author is not blinded by the kind approval of his friends into thinking his verses are deserving of unqualified praise. It is with considerable fear for the fate they may meet at the hands of experienced critics that they are offered to those who care to read them.

T. B. W.

Edmonton, Alberta.

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Gates of Glory

The Viking Blood

A tale of fortitude and of romance,
    Excelling far the general run
Of courage, danger or of chance,
    Is worth the yarn, however spun
From history's glorious fabric,
    Or from legend's weaving won.

Since Hudson braved the westward lure
    To seek the hidden Northwest Way,
No nobler saga of the frigid shore
    Has come from out of Hudson's Bay
Than Munck's great stand against
    Black death, disease and stark dismay.

Sprung from the ancient Viking brood
    Who sailed the northern seas,
Jens Munck had salt-spume in his blood,
    And early tamed the fickle breeze.
His father died in Dragsholm Keep,
    For exploiting Frederick's trees.

This scion of the Vikings' fame
    From Denmark's storm-washed coast,
Aspired to free his father's name,
    Restore his honors lost.
He envied Hudson's great exploits,
    "I'll best them," was his boast.

For him the wide seas held no fear,
    The storm fiends had no doom ;
He loved the off-shore rocks to clear,
    And watch the seagulls swoop and zoom
Above his stout-built craft,
    As the salt-spray washed the boom.

His restless spirit drove him fey
To seek adventure on the seas,
Where cosmographers sought Cathay,
Far westward of the Hebrides.
He sailed to England, Spain, Brazil,
And said his prayers in Portugese.

Red Eric sailed into the west
To find new harbors in new lands,
And Leif, his son, steered his quest
To Vineland's more salubrious strands.
They knew not that they led the way
For later captains to Cathay.

From 1576 to 1620, each with his crew,
Sailed Frobisher and Captain Knight,
John Davis and Henry Hudson, too,
To explore and chart the fog-girt bight—
Names of heroes of past ages
Crowd the Arctic's history pages,
And no man found the fabled way
From frozen night to Oriental day.

Jens Munck, at his king's command,
Weighed anchor in the month of May,
With orders to explore the land
And find the passage to Cathay.
He sailed from Copenhagen sound,
His ships deep laden, westward bound.

The frigate *Unicorn* and sloop *Lamprey,*
With stalwart crew of sixty-four,
Adventured at the break of day
To seek the undiscovered shore.
Munck set his courses west nor'west,
The wind and weather did the rest.

They passed the Shetland Isle of Yell,
And eastward of the Fairo rocks,
Sailed west by north to Cape Farewell,
To meet the Arctic barrier's shocks—
A foretaste of their bitter fate—
Before they passed through Davis Strait.

The summer's sun of mid-July
Was shrouded by the northern fog,
And cautiously they felt their way
By masthead outlook and the log.
The skipper watching on the poop
Could rarely see the *Lamprey* sloop.

They skirted deep Ungava Bay,
And westward traced the foreign shore ;
They sought the channel day by day
That lured them onward evermore.
They watched the icebergs, gleaming white,
Glide ghostlike past them in the night.

They faced the Arctic's twilight void,
And braved the icefloe's ceaseless grind ;
All their seamanship employed
The gate to sunnier seas to find.
Hard driven by the cruel cold,
They conquered hardships manifold.

Delayed by storm and blinding snow,
And laboring with their utmost might,
They forced their vessels through the floe,
Nor ceased their labor day or night,
Till worn, exhausted they at last
The headland of the strait had passed.

September's shadowed days began,
And westward still Munck urged his way,
Within life's hour-glass-measured span
To reach the undiscovered bay
Where death and fate a vigil kept—
Where Danish seamen long have slept.

Through hungry days and sleepless nights,
Worn by the dread of nameless death,
Awed by the Arctic's awesome sights
And frozen by its bitter breath,
Their number dwindled one by one,
Till only four were left alone.

Of all the men who sailed away
To find the fabled passage west,
But four escaped that fatal bay,
The Arctic's blight had killed the rest.
Their corpses lay beneath the tide,
A tomb by heroes sanctified.

They watched the triple Arctic sun
Run its brief day of frosted light ;
They saw the mystic flames that shone
Like gates of glory in the night—
The vast, white wilderness of snow
Bathed in celestial afterglow.

Disease and death took heavy toll
When hunger stalked the barren shore,
And every seaman made his soul,
Nor flinched before the pain he bore.
Like Viking heroes each man died
Beside the frigid Arctic tide.

What of their glory ? What of fame
Still lingers o'er their tragic tale ?
They never won the world's acclaim,
And kings don't honor those who fail.
But their brave deeds, like beacon lights,
Shine as stars in a million nights,
Inspiring men in unheroic days
To seek and follow nobler ways,
And, in their unmarked sea-washed grave,
God knoweth where to find the brave.

The Sea

"They that go down to the sea in ships... see the wonders of the deep."—*Psalm* 107.

Far-flung highway of the ancient world,
Where galleys set their wings of white,
And to the out-land shores unfurled
The banners of their trade and might.
Where Grecian sailors felt the fatal lure
Of the Sirens' mystic, lustful lyre,
And Jason's Argo heroes sailed, in pure
Adventure, daring death and priestly ire,
To seize the treasured Golden Fleece
And bring it safely back to Greece.

The sea, wide, restless in its angry spume,
Remorseless as the storm-swept coast
Where ships in anguish find their doom,
And life and love and lust are lost.
The sea, fair, smiling in its calmer mood,
The scintillating light on crested wave,
Aglow with crimson in its far solitude ;
Remorseful where its waters lave
The shrunken corpses of the drowned,
Where rocky shoal and wreck abound.

The sea, in the sunny, fruitful Caribbees,
Where fronded, island forests spread
Their fragrance on the tropic-laden breeze,
And stark bodies of the pirate dead
Stir ghost-like in the ever-shifting tide,
Heedless of the rich treasure trove
In the dead ships they lie beside ;
In silent coral caves, or sheltered cove,
They rest them in their moist and salty bed
Until the sea gives up its dead.

The sea, submissive to the master mind
    Of captains venturing the unknown main,
New worlds of priceless worth to find,
    In knowledge, science, faith and gain.
But, on the ocean's dim and fretted floor,
    At rest, in many a canyon deep,
The ships that sail the seven seas no more
    Lie rotting in their endless sleep.
They sank to death in blackest night,
    Storm-lashed beyond the harbor light.

The Gougou.

The early French explorers of Canada found the native Indians a superstitious race, but many of the tales of marvels told them by natives were invented as a means of frightening the French invaders away from the unexplored continent.

Among these stories of marvels, which some of the Frenchmen believed, was a description of a one-legged race of giants who were enabled to get through the thick underbrush more swiftly because of their single leg. Another was a yarn of a terrible race of men who lived inland. They had small heads and long skinny limbs, so long that "when they squatted on their heels their knees were higher than their heads."

But the most remarkable of the strange marvels told to the invaders was the story of a huge, female monster, called the Gougou, who lived on an island near the mouth of a river. This terrible creature fed on human bodies and had a sac, or pouch, so large that a full-rigged ship with masts and superstructure could disappear into its wide cavern.

The pagan Indian roamed the woods
Where Acadia's fertile valleys lie,
He worshipped sun and stream for gods,
And slept beneath the starlit sky
When palefaced men from over sea,
With armored might and cruel lust,
Had not despoiled his sylvan liberty,
Nor turned to hate his native trust.

The Indian owned the virgin land
And held his gods in dreadful awe,
He hunted where the mountains stand,
Daring death by tooth and claw.
But, where the salty sea waves splash
Their misty spray, the tribesmen saw
The horrid monster Gougou, rageful, lash
The troubled deep and grind her maw.

This frightful, heathen Juggernaut,
Revengeful, evil, predatory beast,
To gorge her raging hunger sought
The helpless humans for her feast.
Enambushed in her dimlit island caves,
She lay athwart the reeking spume,
And waited for the red-skinned braves
To stumble blindly to their doom.

Like prehistoric, reptile dinosaur,
Of towering height and monstrous form,
She churned the ocean into gore,
And screamed her challenge to the storm.
Beneath her dripping, blood-soaked breast,
She bore her dark and dreadful sac,
Where smothered victims, once inpressed,
From that vile cavern ne'er came back.

The savage Indians told this tale
Of the Gougou's cruel, lustful rage,
To Frenchmen sailing through the gale
A conquering, Christian war to wage.
They sought to awe the invading foe,
To strike black terror to his heart
With tales of death and direst woe,
And make his armored ships depart.

The invaders spread their settlement,
Built their forts and tilled the soil,
To tame the wilderness they bent
Their wills and spent their toil.
And now, where virgin forests grew,
Great cities raise their modern brood
Of darker evils than the Indians knew
In their ancient, savage solitude.

What Owest Thou ?

Time dulls the edge of sorrow,
And men forget
The bitter travail of their woe,
The burden of their debt ;
They turn them to the toils of peace,
The mart, the office and the plow
And reap the fruits of sacrifice—
"What owest thou ?"

Heroes of yesterday who fought
And bled and died,
Gave of their best, and dying bought
A victory sanctified.
They shrank not from the pangs of death,
They kept their vow,
They tasted sorrow at its dregs—
"What owest thou ?"

To those who won thee all thy peace
"What owest thou ?"
For home and friends and sheltered ease,
"What owest thou ?"
To God who gave thee those brave men
Who by their bloody toil
Saved thee from slavery then,
Saved thee thy native soil ;
Ask of thy soul the question now,
"What owest thou ? What owest thou ?"

Then in sacred memory of the dead,
Go pay thy vow,
In service to thy fellow men, and to thy God,
"What owest thou ?"

Joy Cometh in the Morning

The bitter winds of winter blew
Across the grey-clad, sombre land,
And fell the icy, north-born snow
In deeper drifts on every hand.
The leafless trees stood gaunt and white,
Like skeletons in ghostly shrouds,
To wave their arms in dismal plight
Beneath the swiftly driven clouds.

The evening died in angry skies,
To warn, in gusty scarlet light,
Of nature's troubled harmonies
And from the barren Arctic void,
The tempest in its sulky rage,
All its martial panoply employed
Its elemental war to wage.

But, at the pearly break of day,
East was rimmed by saffron light,
Storm clouds all were blown away,
Like dusky shadows of the night.
And over hill and vale and stream,
O'er farm and town and frozen ford,
The surpliced world was all agleam
With the glory of the Lord.
The morning sang its sweetest psalm
To celebrate the welcome calm.

The Battle of Faiths

On April 7th, 1604, Pierre du Guast, Sieur de Monte, Lieutenant-General of King Henry IV in Acadia, sailed from Havre de Grace at the head of an expedition for settlement in the eastern territories of New France. He had been given authority to impress a crew for his caravels from the "idlers and vagabonds of Paris," and, in addition, there were several men of condition who went as volunteers in the adventure.

De Monte was a Protestant and he had secured the services of some ministers of the Calvinistic faith for the purpose of converting the heathen in the new lands to the Christian religion. When the Catholic church authorities heard of de Monte's move in the interest of Protestantism, steps were taken to gain authority from King Henry to have an equal number of priests included in the expedition's complement.

Scarcely had the voyage begun than the priests and ministers began to dispute over matters of faith and doctrine. Their argument became so bitter that they engaged in fisticuffs and scandalously upbraided each other in disgraceful manner. They kept their quarrel up throughout the voyage.

The vagabond sailors, who had urged on the contestants in the theological dispute, ended their tolerance and ridicule of the affair by burying a Calvinist minister and a Catholic priest, who died at St. Croix Island, in the same grave: "to see if they could rest peacefully or continue the fight over their beliefs after death !" Samuel de Champlain, who was a passenger on the caravel on the trip to New France, said of the affair: "I have seen our curé and the minister fall to with their fists on questions of faith. I cannot say which had the most pluck or which hit the harder : but I know that the minister sometimes complained to Sieur de Monte that he had been beaten. This was their way of settling points of controversy. I leave you to judge if it was a pleasant thing to see."

Controversy Joined

The French King's captain in Acadia
Had crossed the Ocean Seas,
With his crew of ribald sailormen,
And gentlemen of ease.
He trod his heaving quarterdeck—
His right by royal leave—
As the lookout at his masthead spied
The cliffs of Cap la Heve.

De Monte, who was a Protestant
With missionary zeal,
Had enlisted Calvin's ministers
To preach and pray and heal.
But when the Pope had heard the tale
Of heretical design,
He promptly ordered priests on board,
With sacramental wine.

And all the way from Havre de Grace
To New France's virgin woods,
The voyage proved most turbulent
With ministerial feuds.
The priests outbid the Protestants
For the ghostly right to pray,
The pastors argued loud and long
From the Calvinistic way.

And ever thus, from break of day
To clouded sunset hour,
The battle of their faiths they waged,
With fervor and with power.
Nor did they fight with words alone
For their contending creeds,
Their arguments were oft disproved
By most unchristian deeds.

They drenched each other's nose in blood,
In pugilistic mood,
Their language was unscriptural,
Unchurchmanly and lewd.
The godless sailors crowded round,
To hear the doctrinaires
Disputing over Christian laws,
Sacraments and prayers.

And when, ashore on Isle Ste. Croix,
Two angry churchmen died,
The seamen dug a common grave
And laid them side by side.
The Calvinist and Roman priest,
Might fight it out, forsooth,
Where death alone could be the Judge
Of which had held the truth!

The Everlasting Hills

Where the everlasting mountains,
    Far beyond the western plains,
Pour the ice-fed boiling torrents
    Down their jagged, rock-ribbed veins,
I have seen the golden sunrise,
    In the dusky-shadowed dawn,
Flush the pearly peaks with glory,
    And the heights with splendor crown.

I have seen the emerald waters
    Of the Kootenays burn with gold,
And the valleys and the woodlands
    Their sylvan charms unfold;
I have stood amid the grandeur
    Of that scenic wonderland,
And breathed the breath of forests
    Where the Douglas fir trees stand.

I have seen the crest of Robson,
    In the sunset's crimson light,
And watched its shadows deepen
    To the sable robes of night.
I have heard the wind's soft music
    In the harp strings of the trees,
And the sound of many waters
    Mingle sweetly with the breeze.

But, despite the towering grandeur,
    Far beyond the western plain,
My heart yearns for the hills of home,
    To climb them once again.
There's a little gorse-clad hilltop,
    Close beside the Irish Sea,
That is nearer, far, to Heaven
    Than the snow-capped heights, to me.

The Publican

The sunlight shone on the Temple walls
And turned its stones to burnished gold ;
The ram's horns blared the priestly calls
In the cloistered court of the sacred fold.

The people stood on the marbled floor,
And watched the altar's burning flame
Consume the sacrifice that bore
The guilt of trespass and of shame.

Among the crowd who sought that day
To share the nation's debt of sin,
Two men went up to the Temple to pray,
In differing moods, without, within.

One was a Pharisee, arrogant, proud,
With scornful mien and richly dressed,
He stood and prayed with himself aloud,
Self-righteous, evil, unconfessed.

The other was humble and meanly clad,
As through the Sushan Gate he trod ;
His face was haggard, his bearing sad ;
He went to the shrine to meet his God.

He thought of the woman he had betrayed,
Of the worried debtor's hopeless cry ;
His lust and the bitter price to be paid,
And the shameful compromising lie.

He thought of his idols of self and power,
Of wealth, and the empty cup of praise
That had spilled its wine, and that hour
He confessed his selfish ways.

To Jehovah's Temple to pray he went,
His soul oppressed with a sense of woe,
And far from the heedless crowd he bent,
The penitent's peace of mind to know.

The arrogant Scribe and the Pharisee,
Stood scornfully by the Sushan Gate,
And watched the publican make his plea,
With angry scowls and wicked hate.

But the publican beat upon his beast—
A humble, contrite and weary soul—
And there in the Temple, he found his rest,
The peace of Jehovah had made him whole.

"In the Beginning God"

In the beginning Almighty God,
Lord of Heaven, Creator of the Earth,
From the dread glory of His abode,
Gave to the spheric world its birth.
It matters not for sacred truth
What plan employed creative power,
What time or method used, forsooth,
A million years or a single hour.
What matters is that every rod
Of earth's round fabric came from God.

Research dismays the feebler mind,
As science probes the sacred scheme,
But faith triumphantly can find
The truth within the wondrous theme ;
That in the dark, chaotic night,
God moved upon the troubled deep,
And out of darkness brought forth light,
He made the sea its limits keep.
And from the throne, where cherubs stood,
He saw His work and called it good.

I Think of You

When evening paints the western sky
With crimson-gold and peerless blue,
And silence holds the world enthralled
Beyond the distant pearl-capped hills,
I think of you.

When shadows drape the sombre land,
And softly falls the scented dew
To touch the prairie flowers and grass
With nature's gentle goodnight kiss,
I think of you.

When school bells call to studious toil,
And children's laughter, sweet and true,
Is heard along the wooded, sunlit vale,
Like gems of music on the morning air,
I think of you.

I think of you, a man full grown,
Amid the din of horrid war and sadly rue
That you should have to face the threat
Of life or muddy death to keep me free.
I think of you.

And when the Sabbath church bells toll
Across the fields, I pray, as others do,
That God will bring you back again
To joys of home and to your friends
Who think of you.

Song of the Trapper

Oh for the sound of the hunter's hail
On the air o' the northern night,
For the musk ox scent on the frozen trail
Where the Arctic ice winds bite—
Where the frigid foam o' the waterfall,
Near the pine trees' shrinking belt,
The clear, cold stars, the wolf pack's call,
And the lure o' the wild are felt !

That's where the heart o' man is tried
In the grip o' the winter's breath,
And the sight of the soul is clarified
In the battle of life against death.
Give me the land where the blizzards blow,
Where life's at its cleanest and best,
And give me the kindly driven snow
For a pall when I fall to my rest.

Where the silent, game-filled country lies
'Neath the light of the midnight sun,
And the north wind sings its lullabys
Let me sleep when my day is done.

I Know a Stream

Beyond the city's noise and rush,
Beyond the mud and dust and push,
I know a stream beneath the trees,
Soft kissed by nature's scented breeze ;
Where fragrant woods in green and gold
Their glorious canopy unfold.
A stream whose music soothes the heart
And bids its vagrant moods depart.

'Tis carpeted in emerald green,
Fast sheltered in a deep ravine.
The spotted trout-fish dart and play
Beneath its banks throughout the day,
And when the purple shadows fall
And night o'er spreads its sable pall,
Its song is muted with the birds'
To softer music without words.

And when, oppressed by rankling care,
I seek for peace and solace there,
'Tis this, with other things I find,
That God in nature has been kind.

The Sparrow's Song

The golden hours of plenty pass away,
Winds of autumn warn of winter's woe,
And soon the last refulgent day
Will be besprinkled with the snow.

A shivering nest beneath the eaves
Will serve to dull the weather's bite ;
A fragile house of straw and leaves
Against the terror of the night.

And when the hoar frost paints the fence
In glittering gems of frigid dew,
The morning brings its recompense—
The gifts of God for me and you.

He never yet has let a sparrow fall,
With fluttered plumage to its death,
Nor failed His answer to its call,
In pity for its gasping breath.

And so, unheeding life's brief spell,
Nor fearful of the final rest,
I know He doeth all things well.
The world is good. His plan is best.

Lines to a Baby
In an Apartment Store

Little maiden, pink and blue,
Smiling, dainty fairy you,
'Mid the bargain hunting mob,
Happy, friendly little snob
Claiming worship as your due—
I could give my heart to you.

As the shoppers heedless passed
You just held my finger fast,
Smiled at me with eyes so true,
I could spend my life for you.
Your wee fingers held me tight,
Pulled me gently to the light.

Tired with labor, pressed by care,
I was ready to despair ;
What kind angel prompted you
Just to know the thing to do ?
What impulse from Babyland
Made me captive to your hand ?

Was another stronger hand,
Reaching out to help me stand
Steadfastly, despite the care,
When you held my finger there
In that crowded, busy store ?
Tell me from your baby lore.

Delphinium

Prince of the garden, high enthroned
'Mid splendors of the summer scene,
Clad in a robe of matchless blue,
Besplashed about with purple sheen.

No shaven monk with cowl art thou,
No funeral plume of sombre mien ;
The sunbeams paint thy stately spire
And deck thee glorious as a queen.

The poppies flirt and dance for thee,
The monk-faced pansies bow their head,
They swear allegiance to thy reign,
Till all the sunlight days are fled.

And in a world that's bathed in light,
Where mortal man his path has trod,
Thou art a finger painted bright
To point his thoughts direct to God.

Dahlia

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth."

Imperial in thy glowing robes
Of yellow, crimson, mauve and gold,
Of classic form and pompous mien,
Thou dost the garden's joy unfold
Before the coming winter's cold.

When autumn's fields turn sad and brown
Beneath the silver disc of night
And under sunwashed skies by day ;
When earth is filled with harvest light,
Thou art the summer's late delight.

Upheld above thy glistening leaves,
Supremely grand, a floral gem,
Of perfect mould and color scheme,
Graceful of petal and of stem—
Thou art a gleaming diadem.

But soon the winter's icy blast
Will lay thy glories in the dust,
A blackened wreck of bloom and branch,
A shrunken thing, all frost encrust',
The symbol of man's pomp and lust
Beneath the shadow of the tomb.

The Afterglow

The summer's golden days are fled,
The trees have shed their autumn leaves,
Withered shreds of yellow, brown and red,
Are piled along the road. 'Neath the eaves
Sir Sparrow quarrels with his mate,
Forlorn stalks that once were flowers
Stand lonely, desolate beside the gate
Throughout the greying, sombre hours.

The care hounds flee at night's behest,
The purple shadows flood the east,
And flaming crimson paints the west—
The daylight fades and nature's feast
Of mystery surrounds the quiet house.
The lamps are lit, the fire burns bright
Upon the hearth, and, silent as a ghost,
Fears for tomorrow take to flight.

Through shades of surging years
The dreams of youth again take life,
And then, resplendent, there appears
Airy castles built amid the strife
Of struggling aims and fleeting joy,
Of honor won and friendship lost ;
Of love's and simple faith's employ,
And all youth's blazing holocaust.

In visions of those bygone days,
I learn the lesson slowly taught—
The sweetness of our cherished lays,
Was always very dearly bought ;
And treasures that are yet to be,
Like gleaming jewels buried deep,
Are part of life's sweet mystery,
To gain them is to toil and weep.
But not the pain and not the woe
Can hold me from that afterglow.

Forward Go

"They turned their faces toward the rising sun."

When westward falls the setting sun,
And evening shadows fill the sky,
When all the day's hard tasks are done,
And to their nests the swallows fly ;
When round the hearth the memories cling
Of better days and past delight,
When snowflakes kiss the windowpanes
And spread their blanket o'er the night ;

Remember then, despite thy fears,
That dawning always brings the light,
That smiles replace the salty tears,
That wrong is remedied by right.
Turn then, thy face from west to east
To greet the newly rising sun,
Nor fret when things make manifest
That joys of yesterday are gone.

The best and brightest lies in store
For future happy years to bring,
And soon thy dirge of sombre tone
Will be attuned to glowing spring.
There never was, nor yet can be,
The best that mortal man can know ;
The fairest visions thou shalt see
Lie far beyond this vale of woe.

The Death of Winter

The firelight flickers on the hearth,
And fitful shadows fill the room ;
The poplars tremble 'round the house,
As though they dread the growing gloom.
Across the fields the lingering snow
Is soft and slushy on the sod
And all the winter whiteness fades
To sombre thoughts of fate and God.

I put my dreams, my pipe and book away,
To watch the gathering clouds aride,
Like charging horses through the sky,
And wonder if their haste betide
Another darker wintry day—
With piled-up snowdrifts on the road,
With branches broken in the woods,
And sombre thoughts of fate and God.

The shadows gather thick and sad,
To hide the street, the town, the land,
And all that I have known and had
Seems slipping from me, as the sand
Slides swiftly in the glass of time ;
And ghosts of memory steal abroad,
To wake the echoes of the past,
And stir up thoughts of fate and God.

The winter's dying breath I hear,
The sound of sobbing and of pain,
As back to where they were conceived
The dreary months return again.
And silent, stark, the darkness falls
Across the trembling, sodden road,
To veil the burden of its toil—
The anxious thoughts of fate and God.

And then, as morning floods the east
    With golden light and crimson glow,
And springtime with its blest surcease
    From driving wind and falling snow,
Dispels the ghostly dreams of ill,
    The world becomes the sole abode
Of all that's fair, of hope and love,
    And happy thoughts of fate and God.

The Saskatchewan River

Fragrant the woods in the springtime
Where the North Saskatchewan flows,
Jade is the tide that it carries
From the drifted mountain snows ;
Rich are the lands that it waters
In meadow, grain field and park,
Sweet is the music it murmurs
'Neath the prow of the voyageur's bark.

Stately the sweep of its current,
Past boulder, sandbar and bend ;
Tree-fringed the shore where it lingers
As summer draws on to its end,
When the woods and hillsides are painted
In a splendor of marvellous sheen,
And the river reflects on its bosom
A glory of gold and of green.

Out of the past it has carried
Its stories of trappers and trade,
Of wars between white men and redmen,
And forts where treaties were made.
And the song of its ages still echoes
O'er the wild-lands tamed by the plow,
And the tales it unfolds are undying
As its source in the bastions of snow.

Pax Vobiscum

"Peace Cometh in the Morning."

Dawns the day when hate and rage
    Have done their worst,
And on the dark fields of carnage,
    The clouds dispersed,
The light of peace shines forth
To fructify the blood-soaked earth.

Long years of dreadful trade
    Have come and gone,
And o'er the war-worn world, man made,
    The nations toil to atone
For all the loss and bitter agony
Of earth's black night of tragedy.

Through rifts that speed departing gloom,
    Hope shines eternal—
Man's day of peace is in the womb
    Of time supernal—
The outlawry of war draws nearer,
The destiny of man shines clearer.

"Mare Nostrum"

The Battle of Otranto

They sailed the sea, a gallant crew
    Who dared the timorous foe to fight,
And from their mastheads proudly flew
    The symbol of Britannia's might.

They swept the waves, the deep, the skies,
    To find the tyrant's boasted strength,
And braved the dark where danger lies
    To win their victory at length.

Of British brawn and soul were they,
    The ancient seadog warriors' brood,
Who manned the guns in many a fray,
    Nor feared the hail of fire and blood.

Death has no terrors for their kind,
    The sailor's grave has lost its sting ;
They fight and in their warfare find
    A glory worthy of their king.

The strutting Duce's towering claim
    To rule the ancient inland seas,
Lies perished, like a dream, and vain
    His vaunted warlord sovereignties.

The lordly Roman warships fled,
    Precipitate in shameful flight,
Before the men so bravely led
    In bloody war for Britain's right.

Their Glory Never Dies

Where once the plowed-up fallow land
Lay fruitful, ready for the seed,
And hedgerows bared by autumn's hand,
Marked out the peasant's pasture mead ;
The clash of arms still shakes the world,
The muttering cannon rend the air,
And from the lowering clouds is hurled
Devastation, horrors and despair.

'Neath smiling skies, on scarlet fields,
Where poppies stain the hillside red,
Unfading glory proudly yields
Glad honors to the heroic dead ;
And we, in far off homeland peace,
Pay tribute to their glorious fight,
And grateful, humbled, never cease
To offer homage as their right.

Beneath a foreign soil they lie—
And some are buried here at home—
Alike their glory cannot die,
Throughout the years that are to come ;
And we, the sons of stalwart sires,
Who cherish dear their endless fame,
Will keep ablaze the beacon fires
That shed a radiance on their name.

A Song of Spring

There's a stirring in the garden
'Neath the tender emerald grass
Strange whisperings and sighings
Where the woodland shadows pass ;
It's bewitching in the valley
Where the river swiftly flows,
Like a crystal flood of music,
From melting mountain snows.

There's sunshine in the meadows
Where the warmer breezes play,
Brown buds upon the willows
Are bursting through the day ;
And soon, the prairie crocuses
Will spread their purple bell
To lure the giddy butterfly
His secret sports to tell.

The morning skies are radiant,
In sapphire shades of blue,
The hedges decked with jewels
Of scented, morning dew.
The robin and his ladylove,
In springtime mating mood,
Are building in the hedgerows
A shelter for their brood.

And all the world is jubilant,
And nature's heart is gay,
Because the winds of wintertime
Have blown themselves away ;
Everywhere across the land
And on the swelling sea,
Is heard the song of springtime
In perfect harmony.

The Shadows Flee Away

When evening paints the western sky
With crimson glow and golden light,
And purple shadows shroud the east,
Like harbingers of coming night ;
When cowbells tinkle in the vale below,
And silence holds the wooded heights ;
When mountain torrents mute their song
To worship God in solemn rites,
'Tis then that man beneath His care,
Finds God in nature everywhere.

When sweetly peals the twilight bell
Across the rolling, fertile fields,
And every haunt of beasts and men
A subtle, fragrant perfume yields ;
When veteran toilers, bent with years,
Sit by the hearth to warm their hands,
And children crowd the corner-nook
In wide-eyed, wondering, happy bands,
'Tis then that home becomes more dear,
Hearts are full and skies more clear.

When rolling drums and trumpet calls,
No longer sound the dirge of war,
And serried ranks of flaming guns
Deep drench the earth in blood no more ;
When men and nations live in peace,
And death no longer speeds its flight,
Like arrows from the bow of Mars,
Across the skies at dead of night ;
'Tis then that men of humble ways
Thank God for better, happier days.

This Faith We Have

The summer's jewelled days are fled,
The harvest fields are white and bare,
The woods are silent, flowers are dead,
And sombre shadows fill the air.

From out the northern tundra lands
The breath of winter sweeps the earth,
And, cold, with hoar frost in his hands,
The angry Storm King rideth forth.

The sullen skies are dark and grey,
The wind's wild music, weird and loud,
The farmlands at the parting day
Lie slumbering 'neath a purple cloud.

But, o'er the world's wide rim appears
A silver streak of fading light—
The promise that, despite our fears,
Another day will follow night.

Though deeper, darker shadows fall,
Though colder, bitter blasts may blow,
Though wilder still the storm fiend's call,
And thicker falls the blinding snow ;

This faith I have within my heart—
That God the tempest will control,
And though the summer must depart,
He guards the ramparts of my soul.
And so, when gathering storm clouds lower,
He sets a limit to their power.

God's Nearness

"Just are the ways of God
And justifiable to men;
Unless there be who think
Not God at all."
—John Milton.

When winter's purple shadows fall
Athwart the houses on the street,
And autumn leaves lie soggily
In the gutters at your feet;
When from the Arctic wilderness
The northern tempests blow,
In blizzards o'er the countryside
To blanket it with snow.

Against the gloomy background
Of nature's frigid fields,
The shelter—the security—
Beneath the shadows yields
A sense of God's own nearness—
His myriad stars alight
Above the world's dark rim
Are envoys of His faithfulness
Aflame with thoughts of Him.

The King of Israel

In Bethlehem, in Judea's land,
Where David kept his father's sheep
Amid the hills, and gentle Mary laid
Her infant Saviour Son to sleep ;
Wise men their costly presents bring,
And shepherds worship Israel's King.

No regal robes were given Him,
No palace glories shaped His bed ;
A humble manger was His crib,
Nor temple victim for Him bled,
The angels on that hallowed night
Provided worthier altar rite.

He came, the weakest, purest babe,
To live the life of man on earth
And purchase, for a world in sin,
Salvation through His mystic birth
And awful death upon the cross—
Deliverance from the curse and loss.

He trod the sun-baked roads
Of Palestine and spent His years
To point the path that leads to life ;
He gave men hope, calmed their fears,
He healed the sick, raised the dead,
And gave His weary followers bread.

And yet, alas, the world toward Him
Is cold, ingrate, nor deigns,
Despite the proof of all His love,
To yield the truth that Jesus reigns
In Heaven and Earth this Christmas Day,
Though angel choirs their homage pay.

New Year's Hope

The old year swiftly fades away
And dies in crimson light ;
The New Year gently breaks to day
From out the purple night,
And o'er the world, burdened, worn,
A brighter, better hope is born.

Across the turmoil of our life,
To mitigate its heavy loads,
To lessen its unequal strife
For fleeting joy, the roads
Of duty, sorrow, labor, love,
Lead to a richer treasure trove—
The day is nearing with the years
That sets a limit to our tears.

Song of the Farmer

I'm a son of the soil
And heir to its toil
To its burdens, its sweating and wear ;
I labor each day
For the minimum pay—
For the bit that's considered my share.

I'm a son of the soil,
And I'm sore as a boil
At the niggardly treatment I'm given ;
I'm the salt of the earth,
Have been since its birth,
For its crops and harvests I've striven.

The thistle and thorn
For my sins I have borne,
As part of the weight of the curse ;
And, bent 'neath the load
I've followed the road
Of poverty, drudgery and worse.

And yet, I'm the man,
Whatever my clan,
Whose labor keeps nations alive,
I'm the basis of wealth,
The fountain of health,
I make the world's industries thrive.

You may be surprised,
That though I'm despised,
I'm the ruler of kings and of you ;
The land and the sea
Are subject to me,
Though my houses and riches are few.

All the silver and gold
That ever was told ;
All the wealth of the Indies, and more,
Is just so much pelf
I don't want for myself,
For I've hope laid away as my store.

I'm a son of the soil
And heir to its toil,
But I'm happier than many by far ;
In the good I bestow,
The faith that I know,
Shines the path of my heavenly star .

Sunshine and Shadow

Why sigh because the shadows
Still linger on the way?
The twilight always mellows
The parting blush of day;
The crimson hue of sunset
Will freshen with the dawn,
And all the glorious sunlight
Flood returning morn.

Oft, when the day is gloomy,
Ere the morning shadows fly,
A golden gleam at evening
Will fill the western sky.
So, weary child of sorrow,
Though life is fraught with pain,
Think not the sun of gladness
Will never shine again.

Would'st thou have life its roses
Each moment scatter free,
And every passing cloudlet
Turn its silvery side to thee?
Such joys would soon be tedious,
Such pleasures soon be void—
The more of toil we go through,
The more is rest enjoyed.

Christmas Day

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these... ye have done it unto Me."

A merry Christmas, gentlemen,
Bedecked in green and red,
Bright with gifts and laughter,
Peaceful and banquet-fed ;
A season blithe with merriment,
Attuned to friendship, gay ;
And may you know no sorrow
This Christmas Day.

But, there are hearts aweary,
Dark with want and woe,
And little wan, tired children
Who tread the deepening snow
And search the kindly crowds
Upon the streets, they say,
For Santa Claus and happiness,
This Christmas Day.

Then spread the Yuletide feast,
To honor Christ the Child,
And give your gifts to celebrate
The world now reconciled.
But, mark you, in those wistful souls
Who search the weary way
Is found the Babe of Bethlehem—
This Christmas Day.

God rest you, bless you, gentlemen !
God keep you kind, and may
You see the Child of Bethlehem
On Christmas Day.

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